THE HISTORY OF GRAMMAR IN THE MIDDLE AGES

AMSTERDAM STUDIES IN THE THEORY AND HISTORY OF LINGUISTIC SCIENCE

General Editor
E. F. KONRAD KOERNER
(University of Ottawa)

Series III – STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS

Advisory Editorial Board

Volume 5

R. W. Hunt

The History of Grammar in the Middle Ages

R. W. HUNT

THE HISTORY OF GRAMMAR

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

COLLECTED PAPERS

Edited
with an introduction, a select bibliography,
and indices by

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FOR HILARY

PREFACE

The papers reprinted in this volume had their origin in a search
for comparative material to illustrate the grammatical part of the *Cor-
rogationes Promethei* of Alexander Nequam. An obvious place to look was
in Glosses of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, and the only twelfth
century Gloss which lay close at hand in the Bodleian Library was that
which I have called the *Gloss Promisimus*. This turned out to be a very
interesting document in its own right, and guided by Charles Thurot, I
began to look at other grammatical works of the twelfth century. Thus
I came to find the *Glosule super Priscianum*, which appeared to be one
of the sources of the Summa of Petrus Helias, and which showed that the
received account of the infiltration of logic into grammar would not
stand. In particular, the role assigned to Petrus Helias was mistaken.
I am glad to find that what I had written about this has been generally
accepted; but I was always uncomfortably aware of the presence of Wil-
liam of Conches, whose work was not available to me. The discovery by
the Abbé Edouard Jeanneau of the two editions of his Gloss on Priscian,
and the comparison made by Mrs Karin Margareta Fredborg of these with
the Summa of Petrus Helias has shown the astonishing extent to which
Petrus Helias was dependent on him. The nature of this reprint did not
allow the recasting of the text to allow the incorporation of this new
material, but I have done what I could to point to it in a series of
additions and corrections.

These first papers were written when I was a lecturer at the Uni-
versity of Liverpool, and I look back with gratitude to the opportuni-
ties given me there. After the War I went to the Bodleian Library, as
Keeper of Western Manuscripts, and the multifarious and engrossing

tasks that occupied me made it impossible to continue work on grammar
in the Middle Ages on the same scale.

   When I began these investigations, interest in the history of gram-
mar was at a low ebb, though Père M.-D. Chenu had pointed out its signi-
ficance for the study of theology in the twelfth century. The rise of
interest in linguistics has changed the situation, and I regret that I
did not have a training in this field.

                                                        R. W. HUNT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

It has become almost a commonplace to record the remarkable progress over a relatively short period that the history of linguistics has made and the recognition that it has generally received. This achievement has been documented (Robins 1978) in an impressive manner and it might be said that the first stage was concluded by the conference in Ottawa to which Robins refers.

The history of medieval grammatical theory has shared in the progress and recognition enjoyed by the history of linguistics but the progress has been of a rather different kind. We have been told (Kelly 1974, Robins 1978) that the Middle Ages was one period in the long history of man's curiosity about language when the study of grammar enjoyed particular esteem; in addition, there have been a number of studies which have suggested that Chomsky, who is one of the few modern linguists conscious of his past and who has demanded that more attention be paid to the historical roots of our theories, could seek more appropriately for his predecessors in the golden period of Robert Kilwardby, the Modistae and the nominalist grammarians of the 14th century rather than in the era of Descartes and Port-Royal, and that there is often an astonishing similarity between the demands of Chomsky and the medieval grammarian (Kelly 1972, Bursill-Hall 1975). This might be branded as 'Whig' history (Butterfield 1931) but to do so is to be as rigid and prejudiced as the historiography that Butterfield was criticising, and also to lose sight of the value of such contributions particularly from the early formative years of linguistic historiography.

INTRODUCTION

The first major modern contribution to our knowledge of medieval grammatical theory is clearly the monumental work of Charles Thurot (1823-82) of 1868 and the student of medieval grammar is still, despite all the progress of the past 25 years, very much in debt to this pioneer work. It is now just over 100 years since Thurot's study was published but the stream of consciousness regarding medieval grammatical theory has followed a very uneven track. Prior to the second world war, and this would be confirmed by a perusal of the bibliography of this volume, the work of two scholars only, i.e. Père Marie-Dominique Chenu (b.1895) and Mgr. Martin Grabmann (1875-1949), are worthy of attention, the former for his recognition of the importance and relevance of medieval grammatical theory to the study of medieval theology, and the latter for his encyclopedic view of the impact of Aristotle on medieval thought, the manuscript tradition, and the richness of medieval intellectual life, especially with reference to the Trivium. It is in this light perhaps that one ought to view the importance of schoolmen such as St. Anselm, Hugo de St. Victor, and Peter Abelard who, although it may be difficult to view them as grammarians in the sense that the modern student of linguistics would describe them, nonetheless made contributions to medieval grammatical thought which are of such significance that no linguist, let alone historian, can escape their implications. All of this in relation to the medieval grammatical doctrine of the richly productive period must be considered propaedutic.

During the second world war and in the decade immediately following a group of studies appeared which heralded a new approach to the study of medieval grammar. Hunt's studies on Priscian in the 11th and 12th centuries (Papers 1 and 2 of this reprinted collection) must be ranked among those that mark a crucial change in direction. It was well known (and often sadly misunderstood) that from the 12th century there was a profound change in the nature of grammatical writing and that this could presumably be linked to the general intellectual change that was taking place;[1] this has traditionally been ascribed in the general histories of medieval intellectual life to a combination of

factors which included the teaching of Abelard, and the discovery and
incorporation of Aristotle's complete logic into the schools.   As far
as the state of grammatical thought and practice were concerned, such
a change was traditionally exemplified by reference to Peter Helias,
viz. Grabmann's statement, "Was Abaelard für die Dialektik, Petrus
Lombardus für die Theologie und Gratian für das kanonische Recht war,
das war Petrus Heliae für die Sprachlogik, für die spekulative
Grammatik" (Grabmann 1956, III:115).

     This is not by any means an adequate statement of the true facts
and it is thanks to Hunt that we now know that the changes in
grammatical thought had occurred long before Peter Helias who in a
sense should be regarded as the culmination of the revolution that
started towards the end of the 11th century, that his teacher William
of Conches was a much more significant figure than was previously
recognised.[2]   The importance of William as the key figure in the
crucial changes taking place in the early 12th century rests partly on
the fact that he was clearly a great teacher, but also because of his
criticisms of Priscian which have a very modern ring to them and which
presaged changes of fundamental significance in the study and con-
struction of grammatical theory.   The fact that we still know little
of the details of the developments in the 11th century is explained in
part by Hunt (p.2); it is nevertheless unfortunate that these
questions have so far attracted little attention from scholars of
medieval intellectual life with the notable exception of Dr. Margaret
Gibson of the University of Liverpool and Mrs. Karin M. Fredborg of the
University of Copenhagen and none at all from the historian of
linguistics.   I have had occasion to deplore the absence of the
necessary textual material;[3] a great deal has been done in the past
few years to rectify this, especially by scholars working in
association with Professor Jan Pinborg at the University of Copenhagen,
but there is no escaping the fact that until we possess a modern edition
of the text and exegetical commentary of William's Priscian Glosses,
we will remain a long way from fully appreciating what took place at
the time.

I venture to suggest that when the details of these changes are more fully known, their import will be greater than merely their implications for the history of grammar in the 12th century, since it will have to be recognised that their significance for the more general intellectual changes was much greater than has been previously acknowledged.   What I am suggesting is that it will not necessarily be our knowledge of the actual changes that will be affected, but our recognition that the part played by changes in linguistic theory has a much more important role to play in our appreciation of intellectual changes and developments than the historian of ideas has hitherto been prepared to recognise.   This alone is of the greatest significance not only to the history of linguistics as its epistemology and techniques become more refined but also to the very status of the history of linguistics in terms of its place in the panorama of academic disciplines and as a necessary adjunct to the history of ideas.

In recent years we have witnessed a number of studies setting out the requirements of history (Robins 1967:1-8, Hymes 1974:1-38, Percival 1976, Koerner 1978); one noticeable characteristic of much of this recent writing on the history of linguistics has been the concern for theory and method (Koerner 1978:xv) and the recognition of the need for a frame of reference and consistent view of the past (Robins 1978:x).   Linguists have learned to appreciate from the example of Professors Chomsky and Halliday the place of theory in relation to other normal linguistic activity and it is refreshing to see the history of linguistics, relative infant though it may be, demonstrating this concern.   The history of linguistics is a very demanding operation; some of the requirements for the historian have already been set out (Malkiel [& Langdon] 1969; Bursill-Hall 1970), and there is much that the historian of linguistics can learn from the professional historiographer and from the historian of science.   One of the most serious attempts to provide the historiography of linguistics with an adequate theoretical basis has been the attempt to apply and adapt some of the ideas outlined in T. S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, but since Percival's searching examination

(1976) it is doubtful whether we can accept Kuhn's theory as a
sufficient explanation for the changes and developments of the history
of linguistics.   This does not mean that we have as a consequence to
abandon all the terms and concepts that have been borrowed from Kuhn
even if the framework is insufficient (Koerner 1978:190).   The history
of linguistics will have therefore to provide its own theoretical
stance but until then we will continue to learn and borrow from the
historian and philosopher of science and indeed from the historian of
ideas.   Part of the whole problem is that in some instances we are
overburdened with material and in others there is a dearth of primary
and exegetical literature (Robins 1978:x-xi); nevertheless, it is
possible to point to certain features that a successful theory must
embody, certain factors that the historian will have to consider.

In the long run we cannot escape from Collingwood's dictum
(1946:9) that history deals with the *res gestae*, and these include not
only the texts and the other teaching materials used but also the
personae dramatis; this is especially true of periods of a more remote
time such as the Middle Ages.   All this is necessary if we are to
reconstruct as best we can the original context of situation.   I have
discussed elsewhere (Bursill-Hall 1966) the need for such reconstruc-
tion.   We must avoid mere chronicle and phatic communion at all costs,
and we must seek for the author's intent in his use of his own
particular metalanguage; this is especially difficult since we are in
fact dealing with two sets of relations to the text, i.e. those of the
medieval student and those of the modern student of linguistics.   This
is important, because the fact is, and this is true whether we are con-
sidering a theory of the present or of the more remote past, that we
have a simple choice, that of understanding the metalanguage or
remaining silent.

The question of the particular metalanguage is closely related to
the question of how we teach grammar/linguistics, though this is not so
much a theoretical as a situational problem; the problem arises in part
because linguistics is not an easy subject to simplify except at the
risk of rendering it hopelessly jejune - there are a number of

problems, each of which constitutes a *pons asinorum* which, if not crossed, will prevent further progress in the art.   Other factors of importance are what type of grammar does one teach and what is the purpose of such instruction - there is after all a world of difference between the introductory undergraduate course and the graduate seminar.   The medieval schoolmen were not faced with the problem of conflicting or competing theories but there was clearly conflict between 'grammatica speculativa' and 'grammatica positiva' (Pinborg 1967:58), and there was an absence of standardised texts with the obvious exceptions of the texts of Priscian and Donatus as well as the *Doctrinale* and the *Graecismus*.   However, it is quite clear that by the end of the 13th century terms such as *modus essendi, modus intelligendi, modus significandi, modus consignificandi,* had achieved a specific status as technical terms in theoretical grammar; their incorporation as technical terms is a clear indication of a radical change in the medieval interpretation of grammar - as radical as the establishment of structuralist and transformational grammar has meant in the 20th century - a change, however, that has gone unrecognised in most intellectual histories (viz. Leff 1968 and Copleston 1972).   It would be an interesting investigation to examine the way in which the beginning student was taught these fundamental concepts.   Whatever the value of the *Doctrinale* and *Graecismus* as texts used for the purpose of teaching a practical knowledge of Latin, I cannot imagine them as a successful basis for the study of theoretical speculative grammar. Because of the circumstances of the day, the individual master was required much more often to prepare his own textual material, especially the commentaries on Priscian which were usually the basis on which theoretical instruction was constructed,[4] but how revealing it would be if we knew more about the particular master, his pupils, his teaching materials, and above all the success of such materials.

There is here a fruitful source of research; the changes in grammatical theory and teaching already alluded to were taking place at a time when education at all levels was expanding rapidly and this was an important factor in relation to the production of text-books and

other study material; to that we can add the needs of the individual
master.   A recent census of unedited manuscript material relating to
grammar in the Middle Ages (Bursill-Hall, forthcoming) reveals an
extraordinary richness ranging from elementary texts to very sophisti-
cated treatises; more detailed examination of this material is bound to
shed more light not only on the pedagogical and theoretical problems of
interest to the historian but also on the masters themselves.   In the
context of situation of any linguistic text non-linguistic factors have
to be taken into account, and I am suggesting that this is equally true
for investigations of the writers of the texts that constitute the *res
gestae* of the history of linguistics, i.e. we need to know something of
the purpose of the treatise and its creator in order to place it in its
more extended context of situation.

     Another difficult problem facing the historian concerns the
material that he must handle and from which he must select.   We cannot
escape from the fact that history is not only the study of change but
also of diversity (Butterfield 1931:35).   The census of manuscript
material already mentioned lists approximately 3000 different treatises;
it may be assumed that there is a similar tradition for rhetoric, and
the corpus of medieval logical literature is enormous. The question
is thus, how do we keep the object of our study within bounds.   It
will of course depend in part on how we define grammar; it must be
recognised that the outward face of grammar may well differ in terms of
the discipline with which it is at the time most closely associated,
and this inevitably entails consideration of the contemporary
intellectual atmosphere.   The danger is that this, the factor of
limitation and extension which is a parallel to the theoretical
conundrum of simplicity versus adequacy, can very easily produce a
two-headed viper, i.e. a) the danger of trying to include too much
material and b) that it will be used with direct and perpetual
reference to and justification of the present (Butterfield 1931:11).

     Another important matter for the historian is the question of
periodisation (Morpurgo-Davies 1975:609-11); she shows that this is
not simply a matter of chronology but rather of theoretical or

concrete questions since concern for them may be a more appropriate way
of labelling a particular epidode in the history of linguistics.   It
is of course closely related to questions raised by Professor Robins
(1974, 1976) and which can be conveniently labelled data versus theory
orientation.   A corollary to this, and this is especially relevant to
the state of medieval grammatical study, is the rivalry between litera-
ture and logic to which grammar was subject and which has caused such a
deep misunderstanding about the status of grammar in the Middle Ages.

     The question of periodisation is one of great significance in our
present context since however one considers it, the Middle Ages covers
a very long period during which extraordinary changes in grammatical
theory took place in an atmosphere of tremendous intellectual ferment.
The period of Abelard and the establishment of Aristotelean logic have
usually been taken as the signal of the break in a tradition which had
been content to exploit rather uncritically the work of Donatus and
Priscian and which had developed language study as a tool for textual
interpretation.   As far as grammatical doctrine is concerned, we can
discern in the period 900-1500 three general divisions which are not
chronological, i.e. a period of literary grammar, a period of quasi
autonomous grammar, and a period of logic when grammar (in whatever
way the term is to be interpreted) was overshadowed by the vigour of
logical study.   The first period, certainly as far as the northern
schools are concerned, came to an end with the anonymous commentators
of Priscian and William of Conches, while the third period is the
period of Ockham when the doctrines of the Modistae were clearly of
little interest to the philosopher of language.

     Between these termini is the period of grammatical speculation,
one of the most exciting periods in the history of linguistics; the
details of the development of grammar have been set out elsewhere
(Pinborg 1967:55-56, Bursill-Hall 1974:79-80), and we can also point
to grammarians of distinction who belong to this period, e.g. William
of Conches, Petrus Helias, Ralph of Beauvais, Petrus Hispanus, all of
the 12th century; Jordan of Saxony, Nicholas of Paris, Robert
Kilwardby, Roger Bacon, the Modistae (cf. Pinborg 1967 and 1972;

Bursill-Hall 1971), all of the 13th century.   Add to these the
glossators Papias, Hugutio of Pisa, Osbern of Gloucester, Willelmus
Brito, John of Genoa; teachers of grammar, John of Garland, Alexander
de Villa-Dei, Eberhardus Bethuniensis, Hugo Spechtsart, Ludolfus de
Luckowe, to mention but a few; the scores of treatises on grammar and
syntax, commentaries on Donatus and Priscian, the many commentaries on
the *Doctrinale*, the *Graecismus*, on John of Garland's prolific writings
(Bursill-Hall 1976), all are part of a rich tradition; little wonder
then that Robins could refer (Robins 1951:80) to the feverish nature of
contemporary grammatical research, which forms the subject of the
present volume.

<div align="center">*   *   *   *   *</div>

     This collection of articles by one of the most distinguished
students of the Middle Ages brings together a collection of studies
that have become difficult of access; there is an interesting parallel
between the modern reprint as a means of making important studies more
readily available as a unit and the propagation of text-book material
for the medieval university student.   Their importance lies almost as
much in the spark of scholarly investigation that they have inspired -
it would be quite fascinating, if it were possible to do so, to des-
cribe and measure the extent that they have been cited in a variety of
scholarly contexts - as for their contribution to original research.
     The original pagination has been retained so that reference can
be made to the original publication; the original source of the
articles is given here in each instance for the same reason, since
their order here, which is different from their original chronology,
has been changed because, although the subject matter is one,
different topics are involved:

1. *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 1:2.194-231. London:
   Warburg Institute, 1941-43.
2. *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 2:1.1-56. London:
   Warburg Institute, 1950.

3. *Historiographia Linguistica* 2:1.1-22. Amsterdam:
   John Benjamins, 1975.
4. *Studia mediaevalia in honorem admodum Reverendi Patris Raymundi
   Josephi Martin.* 85-112.   Bruges: Societas edit. "De Tempel",
   n.d.[1948].
5. *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 2:2.174-78.   London:
   Warburg Institute, 1950.
6. *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 4:2.267-82.   London:
   Warburg Institute, 1952.
7. *Oxford Studies presented to Daniel Callus* (= Oxford Historical
   Society, N.S. 14), 163-93.   Oxford, 1964.

This collection of essays might well carry as its sub-title what
we need to know in order to write the history of grammar in the Middle
Ages.   Some of the requirements for the writing of history and the
details of developments in grammatical theory and pedagogy in the
Middle Ages have already been set out, but these can be re-stated in
summary form, i.e. primary and secondary sources, the dramatis
personae, contemporary literary and philosophical traditions,
decisions concerning periodisation, and of course developments in
grammatical doctrine.   All these topics are discussed in these
articles.

The first three studies in this collection deal with the change in
grammatical doctrine that took place in the late 11th and 12th cen-
turies and from which all subsequent developments during the creative
period of medieval grammatical speculation derive.   The change that
took place coincided with other intellectual events of a similar meta-
morphic kind and was as profound in its impact and implication as any
that has occurred in the history of linguistics.   It involved the
abandonment of an earlier association with literary study which was
threatening to choke it and a fusion with logic which turned it into
an analytic, speculative discipline; this change of association which
has not always been fully appreciated brought about a change in the
nature of grammar of a kind that Kuhn[5] describes, but it must not be
thought that this is always entirely a good thing.   For example, Hunt

(p.75) refers to the kind of example used as illustration and blames
the aridity of much subsequent work on the absence of literary
quotation.   This matter of illustrative quotation is a thorny one and
one which has considerable relevance to modern linguistic writing.   In
descriptive work literary illustration may not always be the most
useful kind, but in all linguistic writing detachment in terms of
illustration is a necessary attribute and one great advantage of
quotation from literature is that it does ensure detachment.

     The names of three great thinkers, who were not grammarians in
the strict sense of the term,[6] are associated with this general
intellectual change, i.e. St. Anselm, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Peter
Abelard.   Another factor in this change was the introduction and
incorporation of Aristotelean logic into the curriculum of the Trivium;
Pinborg (1967:22-23) points out that this was not the first time that
we encounter the fusion of grammar with Aristotelean logic, but this
time it is of a different degree since we are concerned with an
association that was at the same time intellectually all-pervasive.
The name of William of Conches must be associated with this new
direction and the names of Peter Helias, Petrus Hispanus, and Ralph of
Beauvais must be associated with the type of operation described by
Kuhn which comes along after a radical change in theory has occurred.
Petrus Helias presents us with the first attempt at a full, orderly,
and systematised commentary on Priscian, representing a complete
summary of the contemporary state of knowledge of grammar using the
methods of dialectic but at the same time, as Hunt points out (p.70),
trying to keep the use of logic in terms of grammatical theory within
bounds; Petrus Hispanus and Ralph of Beauvais were of the generation
of grammarians immediately following Petrus Helias, but their achieve-
ment lies rather in their attention to syntactic theory rather than to
grammar in the broadest sense.

     It is generally recognised that the schoolmen grammarians made
their most significant contributions to the study of syntax: the truth
of this is much more real than is generally recognised, but for this
we have to thank the fact that none of the major medieval studies on

syntax have so far appeared in modern edition and the absence of any
systematic commentaries on medieval syntactic theory is a real gap in
our knowledge.   The importance of Hunt's suggestions that Petrus
Hispanus and Ralph of Beauvais were among the most important figures
because of their concentration on syntax has largely gone unnoticed,
though it must also be reported that Dr. C. H. Kneepkens has recently
published studies (1976, 1977, 1978) of the greatest importance
because of the light they cast on developments in syntactic theory in
the second half of the 12th century.   It is perhaps worth noting, as
Leff points out (1968:153), that students at Oxford were expected to
hear the Priscian minor twice and this does not appear to have been the
case with other books belonging to the medieval grammatical corpus;
this fact would presumably call for extensive commentary on the
Priscian minor, and the regrettable thing is that all the major works
on syntax which we can ascribe to specific authors,[7] (apart from
Hunt's discussions of Petrus Hispanus and Ralph of Beauvais in items 2
and 3 of this volume), not to mention many anonymous treatises (and
the manuscript tradition is rich in unedited treatises on syntax),
have so far escaped serious exegetical commentary.

The fourth paper (117-44) deals with a problem that concerns all
students of the medieval liberal arts.   The schoolmen sought for an
encyclopedic approach to all learning and this led them to stress the
essential unity behind all learning; this can be disconcerting to the
student of today accustomed as he is to the compartmentalisation of
studies typical of the modern university, but it was obviously a
matter of paramount concern to the schoolmen.   Earlier it was stated
that there was a sense of unity in the Liberal Arts especially in the
Trivium but this must not be interpreted as meaning that the schoolmen
failed to recognise differences in their individual disciplines, and
this must indeed have been true for grammar, since grammarians always
had another hat to wear, i.e. of the rhetorician or logician; the
unity in question was essentially a matter of method, and during the
12th century, especially the first half, a great deal of attention was
paid to the problem of expounding a text which was the starting point

of each and every discipline since the method enabled them, as Hunt
points out (p.141), to combine and yet keep separate the general
introduction to an art and the introduction to the particular text,
and this applied just as much to the teaching of grammar as to the
teaching of the Psalter or astronomy.   Hugo de St. Victor argued that
the seven liberal arts did form a coherent whole and that no one can
become a philosopher unless he had studied them all; this can be re-
phrased and given a modern twist to state a problem which should be a
matter of profound concern to all educators, i.e. how can we produce a
'rounded' person unless he know something of language, literature,
history, philosophy, mathematics, and science, and at the same time
prevent him from being anthologised and thus filled with only a very
superficial knowledge.   The importance of this particular article is
that though it may concern itself with the nature of the pedagogy of a
particular 'art', it is nonetheless something that can be applied to
any art since it involves both principle and practice; it thus answers
in part the very important question of how grammar, especially
theoretical grammar, was taught in the medieval university.[8]

The remaining three studies deal with the textual materials
available to the medieval student of grammar.   It must be remembered
that a variety of interests and needs had to be catered for and this
at a time when education was expanding rapidly and text-books and
reference material had to be created in order to satisfy the growing
student population.   There were a number of texts that enjoyed a
universal popularity; Priscian and Donatus had to be read by all
students of the liberal arts and in addition there were the *Doctrinale*
of Alexander de Villa-Dei and the *Graecismus* of Eberhardus
Bethuniensis.[9]   There were other works which also enjoyed wide use
(cf. Bursill-Hall 1977) including the word-books and other treatises
of John of Garland, the *Elementarium* of Papias, the *Catholicon* of John
of Genoa, and the *Liber Derivationum* of Hugutio of Pisa; these were
glossaries, but Hunt is at pains to point out (p.149) that it is
foolish to look on these with a modern eye.   They were in fact works
of reference to be used in conjunction with the reading of texts that

formed the basis of all instruction.[10]

By the 14th century, speculative grammar was on the wane; elementary grammar instruction was no longer part of the university curriculum, e.g. Paetow (1909:46) mentions that this instruction was done in the lesser schools of Paris, and Hunt in his final paper points out that this was established practice at Oxford by the end of the 13th century.   This whole matter of grammar instruction is one that requires further investigation; Hunt brings to our attention a number of masters who were teaching grammar in Oxford at the end of the 13th and during the 14th centuries and the teaching material they used, and in conjunction with Brother Bonaventure's study (1961), we have something of a picture of methods of medieval pedagogy in use in England in the Middle Ages and the scholastic achievements of their students.   I am not aware of similar studies of grammatical instruction in the schools of medieval continental Europe, but Thurot's few references (1868:112,121) paint a horrifying picture of medieval practices.   Two facts of especial interest emerge from Hunt's study, first, the extent to which speculative grammar had begun to affect the content of the text-book material, demonstrating once more that sound language pedagogy requires support from scientific linguistics, and second, with the diminishing of the rigour with which grammar was taught there was a serious decline in the level of attainment.   There is perhaps a lesson here for all of us.

The study of language is curiously mercurial,[11] for just as we seem to have 'language' freely in the focus of our attention, it slips from our grasp.   One feels intuitively that the medieval schoolmen were conscious of the quandary expressed in the conflicting demands of the study of grammar for its own sake, freed of the impositions of both rhetoric and logic, and the search for unity in the arts; there is a tantalising modernity to this.   The modern linguist has often proclaimed the autonomy of linguistics; Hjelmslev argued that language should be studied as a self-sufficient totality, but is this supposed autonomy really anything more than a will-o'-the-wisp?   Indeed the reason is clear, simple, and obvious - language is as large as man.

Bloomfield taught us that the purpose of linguistics is to explain the
place of language in the universe, and this was surely the purpose of
the schoolmen grammarians.   The modern linguist like the medieval
scholar must look for the unified study of man; this is the message of
Chomsky and it was certainly the message of the schoolmen.

     The study of medieval language theory and practice is, as I have
tried to suggest in this short essay, rich and extensive; I have dis-
cussed elsewhere (Bursill-Hall 1974, 1975) some of the work that still
needs to be done if ever we are to have a more complete picture of
developments in the Middle Ages.   Although the position has improved
enormously in the last five years or so, there is still an urgent need
for workable texts and for more exegetical work.   In the pioneer work
reproduced in this collection of articles, one figure, i.e. William of
Conches, stands out as being of exceptional importance, and yet, apart
from two studies (Jeaneau 1960, and Fredborg 1973), we know little more
about him, and this is a serious lacuna in our critical apparatus.

     There is a great deal of factual work to be done, and indeed there
is much that can be done by taking the essays of this volume as one's
inspiration, one's *point d'appui*.   It is clear from what we already
know that medieval language theory is something that we ignore at our
own risk.   The first international conference on medieval grammar
held at the University of California at Davis in February 1976[12] made
it clear that we have to abandon our traditional views about grammar in
the Middle Ages, that in fact we diminish the success of the Trivium
if we treat it as a set of separate entities since there was clearly
unity among them even if there was at different times a different
balance between them.   Indeed there was, as Hunt shows (pp.117-44),
a unity among the Liberal Arts perceived as such by the schoolmen and
which provided the plinth on which all subsequent intellectual activity
rested.   It may therefore be safely claimed (viz. Hunt, p.1), that
the study of medieval language theory will add enormously to our under-
standing of the medieval mind and achievement and therefore of general
history; it will add considerably to our understanding of the history
of linguistics and therefore, by virtue of its success, to general

linguistics, our understanding of language, and hence of man.   We can
learn much from an appreciation of a language theory that was accepted
as more or less successful by its contemporaries worked out in a time
span and intellectual environment very different from our own but to
which we are the very fortunate heirs.

*   *   *   *   *

     I would like to conclude this introduction on a personal note, but
at the same time I am writing on behalf of all who are students of
medieval language theory and the relevant manuscript tradition.   There
have been many gratulatory tributes to Richard Hunt who was until his
retirement Keeper of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and
as such custodian of a unique collection of manuscripts, since of all
the *university* libraries of Europe and North America, the Bodleian is
by far the richest in its holdings of medieval manuscripts.   Students
of medieval language study owe him an enormous debt, expressed in part
by the pioneer work exemplified in the studies included in this volume
but as much by his sharing which he always did so graciously and
unstintingly of what one eminent scholar has called his "incomparable
knowledge of medieval manuscripts" (Harrison Thomson 1969:ix), and
by his unalloyed interest and enjoyment in our work.   He set a
standard of humane scholarship for the study of medieval linguistics
which will be difficult for us to achieve, let alone emulate.

West Vancouver,   G. L. Bursill-Hall
British Columbia.

NOTES

1) It is one of the values of scientific language study (it matters not whether we call it grammar or linguistics) that it must be a reflection of intellectual attitudes and trends, and this is true whether we are dealing with a linguistic theory currently in vogue or with one from the past.

2) Thurot makes only a very brief passing reference to William of Conches; there is an equally brief reference by Wallerand, and the same is true of Grabmann who furthermore, in his monograph on Thomas of Erfurt and medieval 'Sprachlogik' (Grabmann 1943), makes no reference at all to William.

3) The historian of linguistics should be as much a linguist as historian, but he may well lack the necessary equipment to work directly with the primary source material, especially when, as in the case of the Middle Ages, so much of it remains unedited in the original manuscript form.

4) This close association with Priscianic texts may explain, in part at least, the relative paucity of illustration in these medieval commentaries.

5) The gist of Kuhn's arguments is that with a scientific revolution everything, the problems, the methods, the text-books, and the very nature of the science itself will change.

6) This should remind us that it is quite wrong of us to expect that terms like 'grammarian' should have the same connotation in periods other than our own.

7) Such a list of authors includes Petrus Hispanus, *Absoluta*, Ralph of Beauvais, *Liber Titan* and *Summa super Donatum*, Robert Kilwardby, *Super Priscianum minorem*, Roger Bacon, *Summa grammaticae*, Gosvin de Marbais, *Quaestiones super Priscianum minorem*, Hugo de Abbatisvilla, *Quaestiones super Priscianum minorem*, Johannes de Rus, *Tractatus de constructione*, Jordan of Saxony, *Super Priscianum minorem*, Simon of Dacia, *Quaestiones super secundum minoris Prisciani*, Gentilis de Cingulo, *Quaestiones super Priscianum minorem*, Thomas Chirmister, *Quaestiones super Priscianum minorem*, Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Priscianum minorem* (an edition of this by Professor J. Pinborg is due this year from the Frommann-Holzboog Verlag, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt).